28 August 1966

California Farmer
Rm. 402 - 2412 W. 7th St.
Los Angeles, Calif. 90057

Dear Miss McAlinden:

Sorry for this delayed answer. I have been in the East again, spending a week at the University of Maryland and Washington, D. C. We had a very hot, sultry national meeting of the AIBS and international meeting of the International Horticultural Society. It is always a chance to meet once a year old friends, former students and colleagues, etc.

This lot did give me some trouble. My Portuguese is so weak that the names were no help at all and the small sprigs were not much better. No. 1 throws me completely though there are surely not too many herbs with whorled leaves. If the lady could just send some flowers or fruits of that specimens, I could do more with it. It would also be helpful to know if these are all introduced cultivars or some of them natives. No. 2 is certainly a mint and presumably a Satureja. If trailing, it surely must be Satureja douglasii, our native Yerba Buena, of the Lamiaceae. It has no common English name to my knowledge. It is a fragrant herb and presumably could have some value as a savory herb. No. 3 is Borago officinalis, of the borage family, Boraginaceae. Its name would imply that the borage has has officinal or medicinal uses. No. 4 is absinthe, Artemesia absinthium L. of the aster family, Asteraceae. The absinthe or common wormwood is used in the production of the illegal green alcoholic liquor as one of the aromatics. Continued use of the absinthe liquor is said to cause nervous derangement. The dictionary claims the borage, no. 3, is used both medicinally and as a salad. To answer the question about peppergrass, I would have to know which one is meant. If Descurainia pinnata, tansy-mustard or peppergrass, is intended, its seeds were harvested by the Indians, parched, ground to a fine flour on a metate or in a mortar. Because of its peppery taste, the flour was usually mixed with the flour of other seeds. Pinole was usually made into mush. The ground flour was also used for poultices or for a tea, for "summer complaints" of children. The young leaves could be boiled or roasted, and used as a green vegetable. Another peppergrass, Lepidium fremontii, was used as seed flour also in gruel and bread, usually with other seeds. Or maybe an entirely different peppergrass was intended?

No. 5 - is indeed the bladderflower, Araujia sericifera. Congratulations. I have it growing as a vine outside my window on a corner of the house. It seems to volunteer rather regularly about the state. It has popped up several times at the Rancho. Presumably the seeds blow about. I don't know whether it is poisonous or not. Some members of its family, Asclepiadaceae, the milkweed family, are poisonous to livestock.

No. 6 is the Oregon Ash, Fraxinus latifolia, formerly F. oregona, of the Olive Family, Oleaceae. Since the flowers of this species are wind-pollinated, they are not showy at all and usually overlooked. The leaves too are pinnately compound unlike the simple, opposite leaves of the dogwood.

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